

I. Introduction and tonight's text in focus:

- A. Tonight we look to an important passage of Scripture in John's gospel to see how Jesus handles a complex situation involving the moral failure of an adulteress and the misguided accusations of religious leaders. As He does with reliable consistency throughout the gospel narrative, the "Greater Solomon" demonstrates a transcendent wisdom that brings about an incredible turn of events that most gathered that day were likely not expecting. Each time I contemplate this story, my heart is refreshed and tenderized by the merciful character of God that Jesus displays so genuinely and effortlessly. He is the consummate mature spiritual man who restores with gentleness (Galatians 6:1). He is a merciful High Priest who sympathizes with human weakness (Hebrews 2:17, 4:15).

John 8:1-11 | But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ² Now early in the morning (*at dawn, NIV*) He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them. ³ Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, ⁴ they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. ⁵ Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?" ⁶ This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear. ⁷ So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." ⁸ And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. ⁹ Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. ¹⁰ When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" ¹¹ She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." ¹² Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

II. The setting—time, location and people involved:

- A. **Jesus** is in the temple, which is the center of religious activity, teaching what we would consider a sunrise service very early in the morning. The fact that many people have gathered at sunrise is a testament to just how influential Jesus has become. Nobody gets up early for "church" unless they really want to meet God. **Note:** The temple was located in Jerusalem and is referred to as both the Second Temple and Herod's Temple. **Important:** Jesus loves everyone here equally, and seeks to cover all with mercy.
- B. **The married woman** was brought into the temple in the most humiliating fashion imaginable. This woman has a husband and possibly children although this detail is not given. Her family was likely deeply humiliated, not just her. Her spouse, relatives, friends, neighbors and others who knew her were all likely impacted in various ways. I say this just to give a plausible sense of how far-reaching this situation could have been. It's easy to read gospel stories like this one without contemplating the broader implications. We must contemplate them, however, in order to fully grasp the pain as well as the redemption in this situation. Think of her father, her mother, grandfather, grandmother, etc. watching this all unfold.
- C. **The religious leaders** included "scribes (*teachers of the law, NIV*) and Pharisees" and were using this woman and her sin as a way to test Jesus so that they could accuse Him of some kind of errant theological position. Biblical commentators advance the plausible idea that this whole scenario was staged in advance due to the fact that the man involved with the married woman was not included in the accusation. The woman could have been kept in private custody, and the whole situation could have been handled privately, but the religious leaders—who sadly did not have the heart of God—sought to bring about the utmost humiliation. Reading this story gives you the sense of how far those with a religious spirit will go because of their animosity toward Christ Jesus. The fact that they would use this woman almost as a pawn in their game or strategy to find something against Jesus is egregious in a way that is difficult to put into words.
- **Note:** The Law of Moses does specify a number of marriage violations (Leviticus 20, Deuteronomy 22:13-30), and some of them are punishable by death (Leviticus 20:10, Deuteronomy 22:22). A careful reading of these laws shows that both parties involved in adultery were to be put to death. Also of note is the requirement that women were to be shown dignity in proceedings related to sexual misconduct and marriage, and heavy fines were to be levied if women were falsely accused or deemed unwanted with spurious rationale. In these requirements, God demonstrates a paternal concern for the dignity and reputation of the woman. The fact that the offending man was not present at this hastily gathered proceeding, and the fact that the religious leaders were employing the most humiliating tactics imaginable, was perhaps why Jesus chose to respond with such mercy—to restore her name, dignity, reputation. Remember, God alone knows the full truth in any given situation.
- D. **The crowd** of people gathered. The exact number is not known, but the likelihood is the typically large gathering Jesus was accustomed to at this point in His ministry. Jesus was a household name by now and everywhere He went there were large crowds of onlookers.

III. The response of Christ—seeing His humility:

- A. **“Jesus stooped down...as though He did not hear” (v. 6)**—We begin to see the message within the message. In order to navigate difficult scenarios, there is a spirit of humility or lowliness that is requisite. The text tells us that Jesus is writing on the ground. It’s in this low place near the dust and dirt that clarity comes. Going lower leads to clearer vision. It’s in this humble place and posture that the voice of the Father comes. Jesus never did anything unless He saw the Father doing it (John 5:19).
- B. **“they continued asking Him” (v. 7)**—Jesus is very different than us. He does not speak when we think He should. He seems almost childish in His behavior at this point, just playing in the dirt writing who knows what. Because of the way He was conducting Himself, and His initial inattention and reluctance to address the questions directed at Him, onlookers may have thought of Him as detached or aloof—maybe even uncaring. This is, among other things, what’s uncomfortable about Jesus. He doesn’t carry on like the religious leaders or the crowds do. He doesn’t speak just because there is pressure to speak. He is silent until it’s time to speak, and when it’s time to speak a nuclear bomb of revelation is coming. Conviction is coming like never before.
- C. **“He raised Himself up and said” (v. 7)**—Jesus discerns the right words to speak, the right timing, the right tone, the right spirit, the right everything. He has lowered Himself to gain clarity, and now He will speak with the force of Heaven because the Father has put words into His mouth to share—words that will deeply pierce with conviction, words that will profoundly shock the onlooking crowd, and words that will radically restore the life of not just one individual, but perhaps a marriage, a family, friends, neighbors and many others associated with her. Maybe a whole town or village would hear the story. Maybe people 2,000 years later would read about it and be impacted. Of course, that is the case as the story has been enshrined in Scripture.
- D. **“again He stooped down”**—Again, the message within the message is humility. Jesus retreats downward after everything transpires as if to visually demonstrate to everyone involved that a godly person is to stay low. How does one respond after such an incredible moment of ministry impact? The answer is to stay low. As disciples of Jesus today, and especially as biblical communicators of truth, we must remain in a spirit of humility so that we continue to receive the grace to live the messages we speak. In other words, as believers, we are called to speak the truth (in love) to the world, but we must remain humble lest we who name the name of Jesus and preach the truth one day disqualify ourselves (1 Corinthians 9:27). There are many difficult seasons ahead, and we will need much grace—which God gives to the humble—in order to navigate them obediently. (See Proverbs 3:34, James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5.)
- E. **“Jesus raised Himself up”**—There is still much more ministry even after all the fireworks. Now Jesus focuses on the accused woman. At this point, they are alone. Jesus speaks things to her that nobody else heard. In fact, He spoke more to her than the religious leaders. He addressed her sin and commissioned her in a way that restored her dignity. Of all the people present, only Jesus was without sin and could have, without hypocrisy, hurled the first stone. But He chose not to. He chose to have mercy. He delights in mercy. Jesus knows that mercy is able to solve complex problems that strict and unsanctified justice cannot.
- **Satan**, the accuser, exposes sin in a way that maximizes dehumanization. **Jesus**, the Savior, addresses sin in a way that maintains dignity. **Satan** emphasizes: the past, condemnation, failure; **Jesus** emphasizes: the future, commission, freedom.

IV. Israel and the bride of Christ:

- A. This incredible story encapsulates the timeless prophetic message to ancient Israel. Time and again, Yahweh would call to a wayward and unfaithful Israel that had adulterated her relationship with Him to return to Him. This is also the prophetic call to the church today. So, this one story—in the most remarkable way—gives us a real-life example of how God calls the adulteress out of her sin and back to Himself, but in a way that is merciful, restorative and maintains dignity. (See Revelation 2:4.)

V. A personal story about mercy:

- A. God has shown me incredible mercy in my life. I cannot count the number of times He has allowed circumstances to turn out in a way that were pure mercy—I did not receive the punishment I deserved, and instead I was extended kindness. I could tell many stories of the incredible mercy of God both before and after becoming a follower of Jesus when I was 18 years old.
- B. Personal story of a woman and the importance of showing mercy. So many people are so deeply broken in this world. What if, instead of crushing condemnation, they are shown mercy by those who claim to follow Jesus? How would that change lives, destinies, families, communities, etc. What an honor to treat others like God does. May we not miss the opportunities.

VI. Our response—choosing His humility:

- A. Situations involving heightened accusation will come, and we must all make a decision not to join the religious mob. When we respond humbly like Christ, we see more clearly and have the perspective (and motivation) to handle truth well and show mercy.

Help me improve my notes! The first person to point out a legitimate mistake/typo on this document (during service) gets \$1/a gift.

Greater Peoria House of Prayer Announcements for March 15, 2024.

1. **Welcome** to the Greater Peoria House of Prayer... we're glad you're here and blessed to be worshipping God with you! Be sure to pick up any of the **free** materials at the back table in the prayer room or the desk near the front of the Gathering Grounds area downstairs, which includes teaching notes, stickers, pens, prayer cards and more. **Schedule:** We currently host evening prayer from 7-8 p.m. each Wednesday. Our **Friday Encounter Night** is from 7-9 p.m. and is our main corporate gathering each week featuring live worship and a teaching to inspire love for Jesus and prayer.
2. **General Announcements: Central Illinois School of Prayer:** Our Spring 2024 classes are underway. More information at gphop.org/school. **Upcoming events:** We are hosting a special two-night "Fresh Fire Weekend" Saturday, May 4 - Sunday, May 5. Invite a friend and come on out!
3. **Prayer room ministry opportunities:** If you are interested in leading or ministering during a live worship set by singing, playing an instrument, prayer leading or on the sound board, please contact us at info@gphop.org. We'd love to have you serve on one of our teams! **Team ministry opportunities:** If you feel the Lord has gifted you in the prophetic (or would like to grow in this gifting) and would consider helping on a prophetic team, send an email to info@gphop.org. Contact Mandy Kistner at mandy@gphop.org if you would like to schedule a future healing ministry appointment or help out on the healing team.
4. **Missions:** Please keep the following missionary friends in prayer as well as be considerate of their financial needs: **Ashley Bucknam** (YWAM, Nepal); **Phil Kellenberger** (International House of Prayer; Kansas City, MO) **Babett Mueller** (111 Global; Kansas City, MO); **Kerusso Perhay** (Pioneer 61; Mozambique); **Eric and Erin Simmons** (Bethany Global University; Bloomington, MN); **Alicia Wright** (ACTS, India); **Austin and Amy Zhu** (International House of Prayer; Kansas City, MO).
5. **Military:** Please keep the following members of our military in prayer as they valiantly serve the United States of America: **Jake Gerst**, stationed in Fort Johnson in Vernon Parish, Louisiana. **Kyle Nix**, stationed in Fairchild Air Force Base in Spokane County, Washington.
6. **Social media:** Follow us on Facebook (Greater Peoria House of Prayer - GPHOP), X (@GPHOPrayer), Instagram (@GPHOPrayer), TikTok, Vimeo and YouTube for regular updates and inspiration. Use these social media sites to get the word out, share pictures, quotes you heard, etc. Contact Derek at derek@gphop.org if you're interested in helping with GPHOP's social media.
7. **Haven ministries:** Do you need space to pray? Maybe your Christian group needs a place to meet every once in awhile. We're making available the upper Prayer Room and lower-level Gathering Grounds for rent by donation. Email info@gphop.org if interested.
8. We provide **free Wi-Fi** to everyone here! The password for the **GPHOP** router is on the chalkboard in the downstairs fellowship area.
9. **Prayer requests:** If you would like our community to pray for someone or something specific, please submit it to prayer@gphop.org.
10. **Giving:** If you have been blessed by the GPHOP and would like sow financially into the ministry, we would be more than blessed. You can give in cash, but if you would like to give to GPHOP with a check, please make it out to "Greater Peoria House of Prayer" or "GPHOP"—your gift is tax deductible. Thank you for your generosity! It's helping make day and night prayer with worship possible in central Illinois. You can place your gift in the Friday night offering during the 7 p.m. teaching or drop it in either of the two black donation boxes. Donations can also be mailed to our physical address at 117 East Washington Street, East Peoria, IL 61611. Donors can also use PayPal or our website (gphop.org/donate) to give electronically.

*Thank you for helping to **keep this prayer room sacred** by ensuring conversations with others are brief and kindly reminding others to do the same. Use the large Gathering Grounds fellowship area downstairs if you would like to chat at length.*